



# Public Health Bulletin

A Publication of the Public Health Department, Gregory Thomas, M.D., Director • [www.slopublichealth.org](http://www.slopublichealth.org)  
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## Health Director Notes...



It is influenza vaccine season again. All medical providers are encouraged to identify and vaccinate your elderly and high-risk patients with chronic disease, such as asthma and diabetes. Please also encourage caregivers for seniors, including medical office staff, to be vaccinated to avoid inadvertently exposing the most vulnerable to influenza related morbidity and mortality.

The supply of flu vaccine seems to be keeping up with demand this year. Many providers in San Luis Obispo County have already received their vaccine and are beginning to immunize their high-risk patients.

The Public Health Department flu clinic day will be November 7 and is limited to high-risk people. Call the Public Health Department for times and locations. HealthPlus Pharmacy at 543-5950 will schedule callers desiring vaccine.

Many community sites can be found at [www.findaflushot.com](http://www.findaflushot.com). Stay tuned for the dates and times for the annual clinics at Sierra Vista Medical Center and Twin Cities Community Hospital.

### Perinatal Substance Abuse

A study was published in *Pediatrics* in August 2001 titled "Prenatal Alcohol Exposure and

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## Recent Rise in Outbreaks of Zoonotic Infectious Disease

More outbreaks of emerging infectious diseases are linked to animal sources, signaling a rising trend in infectious diseases, warned an article that appeared in the August edition of *The Nation's Health*, the official newspaper of the American Public Health Association.

Several recent occurrences of high-profile diseases demonstrate that animals have become primary sources for modern-day emerging infectious diseases affecting humans:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that recent cases of monkeypox that occurred among residents of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin were most likely passed to humans via a shipment of small mammals imported into the United States in April.
- Researchers in China and Hong Kong announced that the coronavirus that causes SARS was present in civets, a small

mammal that is sometimes consumed, suggesting that the animals may have had a role in the global outbreak.

- Canada recently reported occurrences of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, a form of which can be transmitted to humans through beef consumption.
- West Nile virus, which is linked to birds and transmitted by mosquitoes, continues to spread in the United States.

Among the factors that are playing a role in the emergence of the animal-related diseases is human activity, according to Fredrick A. Murphy, PhD, DVM, Dean Emeritus, professor of veterinary medicine at the University of California at Davis, and the former director of CDC's National Center of Infectious Diseases.

As humans around the globe increase their geographic range and rapidly transport goods and people from place to place, the means for

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## County Releases SARS Procedures

San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department (PHD) has recently finalized procedures for "SARS: Patient Identification and Isolation."

These procedures outline how San Luis Obispo County PHD, hospitals, urgent care facilities, law enforcement agencies and emergency medical services providers will respond to a patient who is potentially infected with the SARS virus.

Although these procedures are geared towards SARS, they are applicable for any outbreak of airborne communicable disease.

If you would like a copy of the procedures, call Robyn Meehan at 788-2940.

## Health Insurance Coverage for Children

The First Five (Prop 10) Children and Families Commission of San Luis Obispo County has embarked on an initiative to create a system of comprehensive health insurance coverage for all children.

It is estimated that there are 3,000 uninsured children in San Luis Obispo County. Of those, 1,000 are eligible for Medi-Cal, 1,000 are eligible for Healthy Families and 1,000 are ineligible for either program.

Creating a seamless program that incorporates Healthy Families and Medi-Cal enrollment with locally supported coverage for the 1,000 ineligible for either program, is a task that will significantly improve the health of our children. Please see the attached brochure.

## Zoonotic Infectious Disease (cont.)

animal-related diseases to spread is becoming more and more favorable, said Murphy. As such, public health officials can expect that zoonotic diseases will become more commonplace.

"The best thing that we can do is detect and diagnose early, so that we can apply public health interventions and approaches when we would stand a chance of interrupting transmissions," Murphy told *The Nation's Health*.

While the incidence of animal-related diseases passed to humans is far from new, the frequency with which they are being detected and diagnosed is. Some of the change can be linked to improved diagnostic and surveillance tools, while a portion may be due to greater general awareness among public health officials. For example, when hantavirus was being transmitted from mice to humans in the U.S. Southwest in 1993, it took public health officials months to isolate the virus that was causing the illness.

In comparison, in just weeks, CDC officials were able to identify monkeypox as the cause of the recent rashes and illnesses in the Midwest, as well as determine how the disease was introduced into the United States.

Another change is that the recent U.S. emphasis on bioterrorism and preparedness has put public health officials on alert for unusual diseases, especially those that include fevers or rashes, which may also contribute to faster identification of animal-related disease.

The investments that have been made in the nation's public health infrastructure since September 11, 2001 have both improved the nation's ability to detect bioterrorist activities and identify naturally occurring diseases, according to David Fleming, MD, CDC deputy director for public health science.

"This is confirmation of, number one, the need to invest in our system, and number two, the effectiveness of that system," Fleming said during a June CDC briefing on the monkeypox investigations.

Certain zoonotic diseases are more endemic to rural areas where the prevalence of rabies, plague and Lyme disease is greater than in more urban and suburban areas of the state. As residents are moving further into formerly wilderness areas, the potential for exposure to wildlife and the diseases they carry is greater.

Increasing physician awareness of zoonoses will help reduce diagnostic delays and could improve response to treatment. Educating the public about the relationship of animals and zoonoses is also an essential component in controlling zoonotic disease.

## Help with Cancer Survey Requested

Marin County has had high rates of breast cancer (and some other types of cancer) among its residents. There has been no scientific explanation for these high rates.

The Marin Cancer Project is a non-profit, grassroots organization started by a Marin County resident who wanted to “search for the cause.” The support of the Family Health Outcomes Project of the University of California, San Francisco, was enlisted to help in a research project.

San Luis Obispo County was one of the 33 peer counties identi-

fied to participate. They are requesting the support of peer counties in completing a survey questionnaire on November 8. The questionnaire will be available both online and in a hard copy (and will also be available in Spanish).

Survey data from Marin will be analyzed and compared to data from participating counties throughout the United States to identify factors associated with higher and lower rates of cancer. More information is available at [www.marincancerproject.org](http://www.marincancerproject.org).

Please consider posting the enclosed flyer and distributing it to your patients, friends and acquaintances.

## Health Director (cont.)

Childhood Behavior at Age 6-7 Years: Dose-Response Effect” by Sood, et al. 655 children were randomly selected from over 4800 mothers screened between 1989 – 1991.

The study concluded that maternal alcohol consumption even at low levels was adversely related to child behavior. A dose-response relationship was also identified.

The effect was observed at average levels of exposure of as low as one drink per week. Although effects on mean scores for externalizing and aggressive behaviors were observed at low levels of prenatal alcohol exposure, effects on delinquent behavior and total problem scores were seen at moderate/heavy levels of exposure.

Children with any prenatal alcohol exposure were 3.2 times as likely to have delinquent behavior scores in the clinical range compared with nonexposed children.

The relationship between prenatal alcohol exposure and adverse childhood behavior outcome persisted after controlling for other factors associated with adverse behavioral outcomes.

Clinicians are often asked by pregnant women if small amounts of alcohol intake are acceptable during pregnancy. This data suggest that no alcohol during pregnancy remains the best medical advice. *Pediatrics* 2001; 108(2). URL: [www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/108/2/e34](http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/108/2/e34).

The perinatal substance abuse task force is focusing on increasing screening, education and expedited referral for those who need further counseling and treatment services.

## AIDS Symposium Set for November 13

The 15<sup>th</sup> annual AIDS Update Symposium will be held on Thursday, November 13 at Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo. As in past years, the event concentrates on the emerging issues surrounding HIV disease and AIDS. This year, the focus will go beyond treatment, drug adherence and quality of life issues and will spotlight other factors that affect those living with HIV/AIDS.

The three keynote speakers are: Neva Chauppette, Psy.D.; Orlando Pile, M.D., CCHP; and Joseph Engelman, M.D., M.P.H.

“Substance Abuse and HIV/AIDS” is the topic of Dr. Chauppette’s presentation. Dr. Chauppette, a licensed psychologist, has worked in the field of substance abuse and HIV since 1988 and is now project director of a mobile medical clinic providing comprehensive HIV, hepatitis and STD services to substance abusers in and out of treatment.

Dr. Pile’s presentation, “From Corrections to Community,” will deal with transitioning HIV positive inmates to community resources. Dr. Pile is the chief of communicable diseases at the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department Medical Services.

Dr. Engelman will present “STDs: Emerging Issues in HIV/AIDS Healthcare.” Dr. Engelman is the senior physician specialist in the STD Prevention and Control Section of the San Francisco Public Health Department’s City Clinic.

This is a great opportunity to gain further knowledge about the ever-changing HIV/AIDS situation. CEUs and CMEs will be offered. For more information about the symposium, call Terry Comer or Edie Kahn at the AIDS Support Network, 781-3660.

## San Luis Obispo County Reported Cases of Selected Communicable Diseases - 2003

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# Why are cancer rates so high in Marin County, CA?

*Join us today in our*  
**SEARCH FOR THE CAUSE**

**M**arin County, California, known for its high income, highly educated population and active pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, has inexplicably high cancer rates. The residents of Marin want to know why. Multiple causes have been suggested, but to date no comprehensive study of this trend has been completed.

On November 6th, a survey will be distributed to residents in 33 counties as part of the Peer Cities and Counties (PC2) Study, an epidemiological research project that compares population characteristics and cancer rates of Marin County, California to thirty-three communities within the U.S. that are either similar or dissimilar to Marin County. Unlike much current research that examines one kind of cancer or cancer risk, the PC2 study looks across a broad spectrum of potential causes of many kinds of cancer. This broad-based epidemiological research will allow scientists to ask better and more targeted research questions in the future. All of the information gleaned from this study will be shared with each of the Peer Counties.

**Take the survey online at [www.marincancerproject.org](http://www.marincancerproject.org)  
and help us by promoting it in your community.**

*The* MARIN  
**CANCER**  
PROJECT